

UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

Prentice Computer Centre

NEWSLETTER

authorization: Director of the Centre

1 SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

We are not satisfied with our recent level of performance. Whilst no work has been unduly delayed, the number of crashes has been far too high. We do have a transient hardware fault that has been difficult to isolate. This is accentuated by a problem with the monitor which should allow the system to trap some of these faults and continue rather than crashing the complete system. We are working to correct these difficulties.

The work of the Centre increased 45% in 1974 as compared to 1973 and the 1975 load is almost double the 1974 level. You will appreciate, therefore, that this very significant rate of growth has placed pressure on the system and our staff. The number of equipment items to be maintained is almost double the number installed in 1972. As a result, the statistical chance of a fault is much higher. Thus, although now with duplication of essential items of equipment, we can continue to maintain service albeit in a degraded mode the probability of fault is higher.

These comments are offered by way of an explanation of our problems rather than as an excuse. The continued reliability of the equipment and the confidence of our users in its availability is the major concern of the Centre.

As mentioned in our last newsletter, major overhaul of the air conditioning plant will occur over the next three weeks. Whilst we expect to keep the Centre operational, there may be some short periods when the system may not be available.

2 EVAL

Some problems have been experienced with the optical mark card reader due to the high tolerances required to read in 80-column mode. These will be overcome in the near future by using a redesigned card to be read in 40-column internally clocked mode. As an interim measure, much better performance is achieved by using the Optical Mark Reader in 40-column (internally clocked) mode even with the present cards. An implication of this mode of operation is that control cards must also be punched following a 40-column convention. As this is a little unconventional, it would be preferable for the Centre to punch all control cards.

Until further notice, users of EVAL must -

- (a) use only cards produced by IBM. (Supplies of these are available from the University Stationery Store);
- (b) hand all EVAL decks to the Centre Enquiry Window with the necessary parameters specified on the appropriate slip (refer EVAL manual page 6-1). The Centre will punch up the parameter card and setup and run the job for the user.

3 NEW ALGOL

Algol Version 5, featuring FORTRAN-10 interface routines and more efficient implementation of strings, is now available on the NEW: directory. Version 4 has been moved to SYS: and version 3B will be retained on OLD: for a limited period.

Documentation of the new features of V5 is available in the file NEW:ALG5.DOC.

Users are invited to test V5 and report any difficulties encountered.

4 NEW COBOL

On Monday, 14 July, the version of COBOL 6(307)-2 and LIBOL 7(401)-2 on NEW will replace the versions on SYS (respectively versions 6(222), 7(347)).

The COBOL on NEW contains a few patches, the most important being the correction that allows Macro subroutines to return arguments correctly to COBOL main programs. This version has been tested extensively. The only reported problem is also applicable to the system version and concerns the truncation of trailing spaces in literals which extend for more than one source statement.

The version of COBOL on OLD 5(107) treats this situation differently and will be left on OLD unaltered.

5 NOTICE TO USERS OF SPECIAL STATIONERY

A new version of the Line Printer Spooler has been installed. This corrects a number of deficiencies in the older one and improves handling of special stationery. However, to take advantage of this facility, users must quote the names of special stationery correctly and provide full details of their special forms to the Centre before using them. Any users who have special stationery, please contact Chris de Voil on extention 6168.

6 INTRODUCTORY FORTRAN COURSE

As advised in our last newsletter, this course will be conducted from 21 July to 25 July at 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. each day.in room B18 of the Hawken Building.

Application forms are available at the Enquiry Window at the Centre and nominations close on 18 July.

* * * * *